

THE LAST LAP

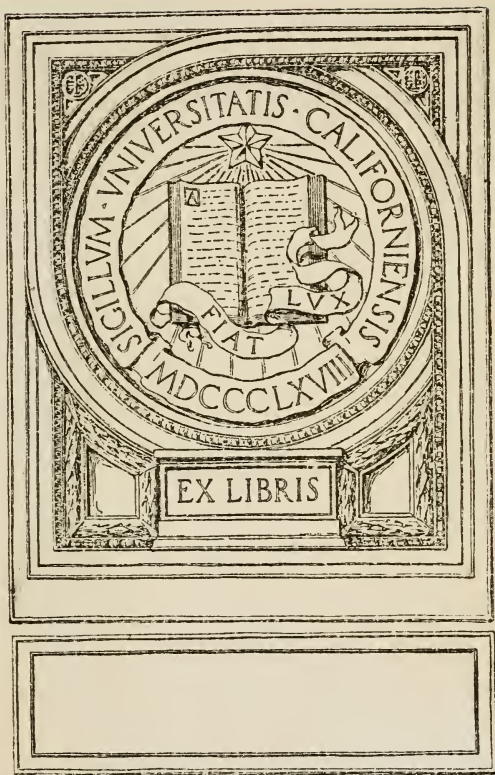
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THE LAST LAP

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BY

“G”

WITH PREFACE BY E. B. O.

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PREFACE

THE articles which are collected in this little volume appeared in the *Morning Post* and many other journals of consequence in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, and in the Overseas Dominions. They were written with the sole intention of explaining the precise position in the Western theatre of warfare, and convincing the man in the street and the man at the club window that the defeat of Germany is inevitable, if only the necessary efforts are made by the people of this country. They have already helped to strengthen the national "will-to-win," and it is hoped that republication in a more permanent form will widen the scope of their appeal.

The initial "G" veils the personal identity of one who, though not a soldier, has lived with soldiers for most of his life,

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and is the keenest student I know of war in all its aspects. His studies have been carried on, not in libraries, but on the field of battle—for he has served as a war correspondent in many parts of the world and seen the evolution of modern methods with his own eyes. At the same time he is conversant with the treatises of the true war experts—*i.e.* the soldiers—and is an admirer of Clausewitz, whose great work on the scope and intention of national warfare—as distinguished from the dynastic warfare of the eighteenth century and earlier ages—is indispensable to all students of the military art.

“G” himself would probably flatly refuse to be classed as a war expert. If, however, it is possible for anybody who has not led an army on the field to be a war expert (which I take leave to doubt), then “G’s,” long and varied experience and his unquestioned capacity for the life-work he chose, or which chose him, entitle him to that somewhat perilous appellation. I should like to set down here some of the

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tributes which I have heard paid to the man and his work by officers of high rank. But he has a soldierly distaste for personal compliments, and I have no wish to risk the loss of a friendship which I value highly.

“G” is one of those men who would sooner do anything than write—something! Only a patriotic sense of national necessity could ever have persuaded him to write a whole series of articles embodying all that he has seen and heard in the course of recent visits to the Western front. That his survey of the position there, and of the prospects of the Allies, meets a national necessity seems to me an undeniable fact. It will count for more than any pronouncement on the part of the politicians who, it must be confessed, are somewhat cold and chary in their appreciation of the glorious deeds of the British Army. In the near past, again, the comments of high-placed politicians on questions of military fact—*e.g.* in regard to the Dardanelles—have so often turned out to be dictated by political con-

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siderations that we have got into the habit of drastically discounting their eloquence. Even the German mark has not depreciated to the same extent as political oratory in this country.

Where, then, are we to find a trustworthy guide to the facts of the situation? Pessimists and optimists pour into us an enfilading fire of fallacy and falsehood; every day breeds its bewildering rumour; and the greater stresses that are now beginning have made many of us the victims of war weariness. The national reserve of nerve power is already being drawn upon; as is evident from the great excitement caused by the recent air raids, though they did not result in any military advantage to the enemy. At such a time and in such circumstances "G's" articles, so obviously the work of a competent and disinterested observer, with no politics at the back of his mind, come like a breath of fresh air into a sick-room. He tells us that the British Army is winning the war, has already got the Boche beaten. Our men

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are superior at every point of the game to the Germans ; even in material equipment they have an advantage which is bound to increase, as time goes on, provided our workers at home do their duty by their brothers at the front.

The Old Army, alas ! is no more. It was the Nation in miniature and it died gloriously, having first saved England's honour and the world's civilisation. The Old Army is no more—but its soul goes marching on and is embodied in the New Army, which is the whole nation, and ever since the Somme advance has been winning the most amazing victories. All this " G " tells us with the simple sincerity which lends to words and phrases the weight and power of things and actions. Not only does he tell us we are winning, but he also explains the how and why of it all. He gives us hard facts and clear figures. Above all, he confutes that popular fallacy, rooted in civilian ignorance of the conditions of fortress-warfare with millions of men on either side and thousands of guns,

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which assumes that an army is undefeated as long as it can avoid a war of manœuvre.

The German line is still, it is true, continuously held. That is because, as "G" tells us, the utterly wrecked areas which are abandoned by the enemy, whenever and wherever a British thrust is driven home, must be organised, before they can be occupied and made the starting-point of a fresh attack. This gives the enemy time to prepare other lines, which, however, are necessarily inferior to the old ones in strength; so that he steadily goes from bad to worse. Once the true nature of this multitudinous ultra-modern form of warfare is grasped, it is evident that the Boche is being beaten—that the immobilisation which Bloch intelligently anticipated is slowly but surely breaking up. "G's" doctrine is confirmed by all the famous French authorities. Their final verdict is the same as his—*On les aura, pourvu que les civils tiennent*. (We have them, if only the civilians stick it out.)

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It is in his final article, a summary of the situation as a whole in what has been called "The Battle of Europe," that the duty of the men at the back is most clearly indicated. The men at the front are all doing their duty, and stand in no need of exhortation. Sir Douglas Haig, having forged a weapon of power and precision, is proving that he can use it to good purpose. The Allies hold together staunchly; Russia will never make a separate peace, and now shows signs of a drastic reorganisation. The war is won, if we will only win it. But complete victory is only possible if England makes any and every effort and makes it *now*.

Germany will not go down without a ruthless use of all her remaining resources. The fate of the Hohenzollern dynasty, and of the system it has created and controls, is in the balance. No sacrifice will be grudged to save this last of the autocratic thrones. Meanwhile the desperation of Germany is shown by their "frightfulness" by land and on the sea and in the air. The

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“ U ”-boat campaign, which the extremists insisted on, was the first act in a ruthless endeavour to force England into a mood favourable to submission and so apply the third axiom of absolute war according to Clausewitz. The air raids over London form another part of the same plan of terrorisation.

There will be new horrors, no doubt ; the resources of Germany's scientific savagery are not yet exhausted. But all this frightfulness will achieve nothing, or less than nothing, if the civilian population keeps its nerves steady, and insists that all the requirements in men and munitions of the army are supplied without loss of time. “ G ” shows us that loss of time is the great thing to be avoided. “ I will give you anything but time,” said Napoleon, who knew that delay was the deadliest sin in war. And “ G ” makes an all-important point in his final article when he rebukes the men who govern us for not understanding the nature of the men governed, who have never in all their history failed to give

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a splendid response to any honest, frank appeal for sacrifices in a great cause.

That the war is won, if we will only win it, is "G's" inspiring message to the nation. But the final defeat of a desperate Germany can only be achieved, if we go all out for victory. Chess, the most exacting of all games of skill, supplies a parallel. Experts often speak of a "won" game at chess; meaning that, taking into consideration the forces and disposition of forces on either side, the one player has only to use his advantages aright to beat the other. But the chess expert invariably adds that there is nothing so hard as to win a "won" game at chess. It is so as regards this war; when the German people awake, as they appear to be awaking, to the real position, the probability is that they will put up a tremendous struggle against the inevitable. It will be hard indeed to win this "won" war. But if those who govern and those who are governed follow "G's" advice, nothing can prevent us from reaping the fruits of a

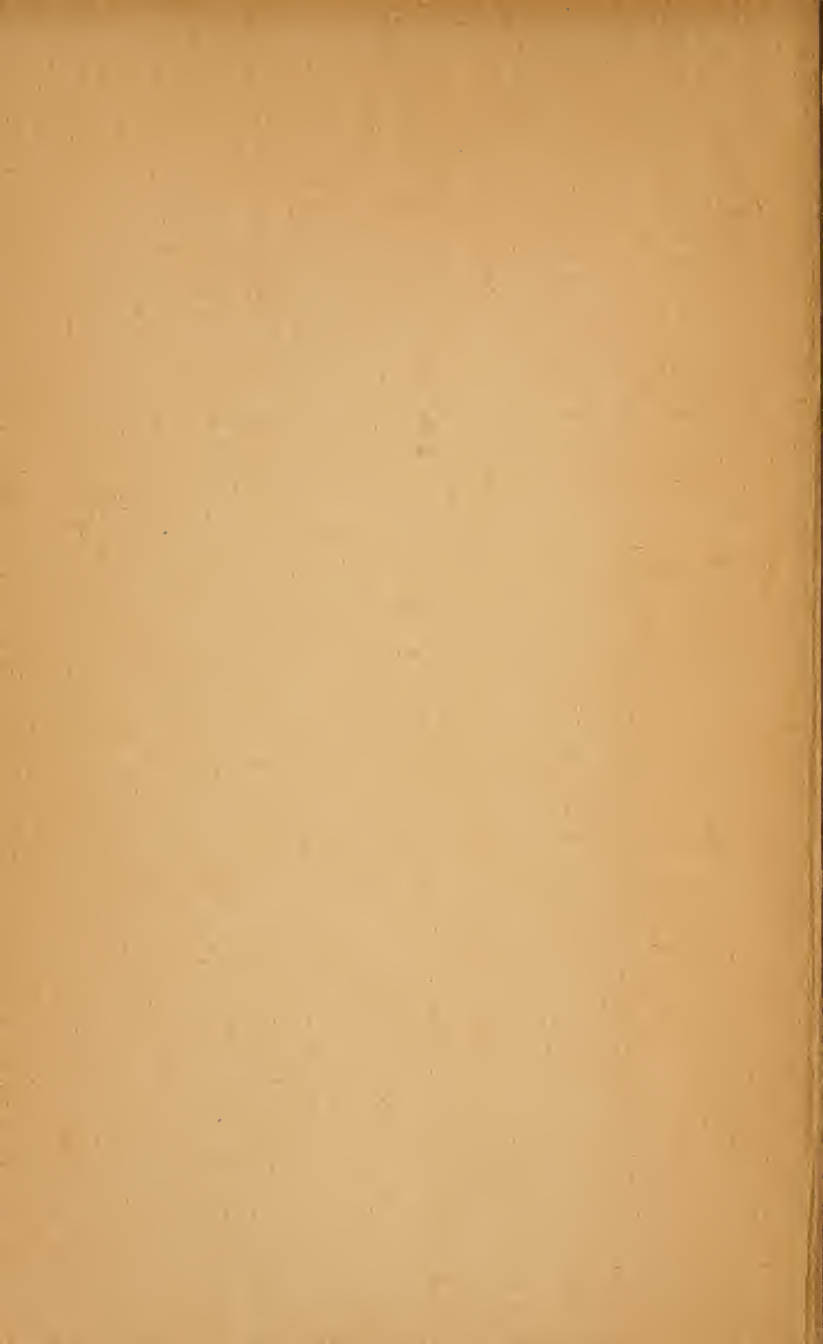
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great and glorious victory and bequeathing to our children and children's children a century of peace and prosperity. The alternative is an indecisive peace which would leave Germany firmly seated astride Europe and sooner or later enable her to wage a war of extermination against us. Shall we sell the victory prepared for us by so many deaths for the unreal comfort of a peace guaranteed only by yet another "scrap of paper"? Or shall we follow "G's" advice, and dare and endure until a felon enemy is powerless for future mischief? There can be only one answer.

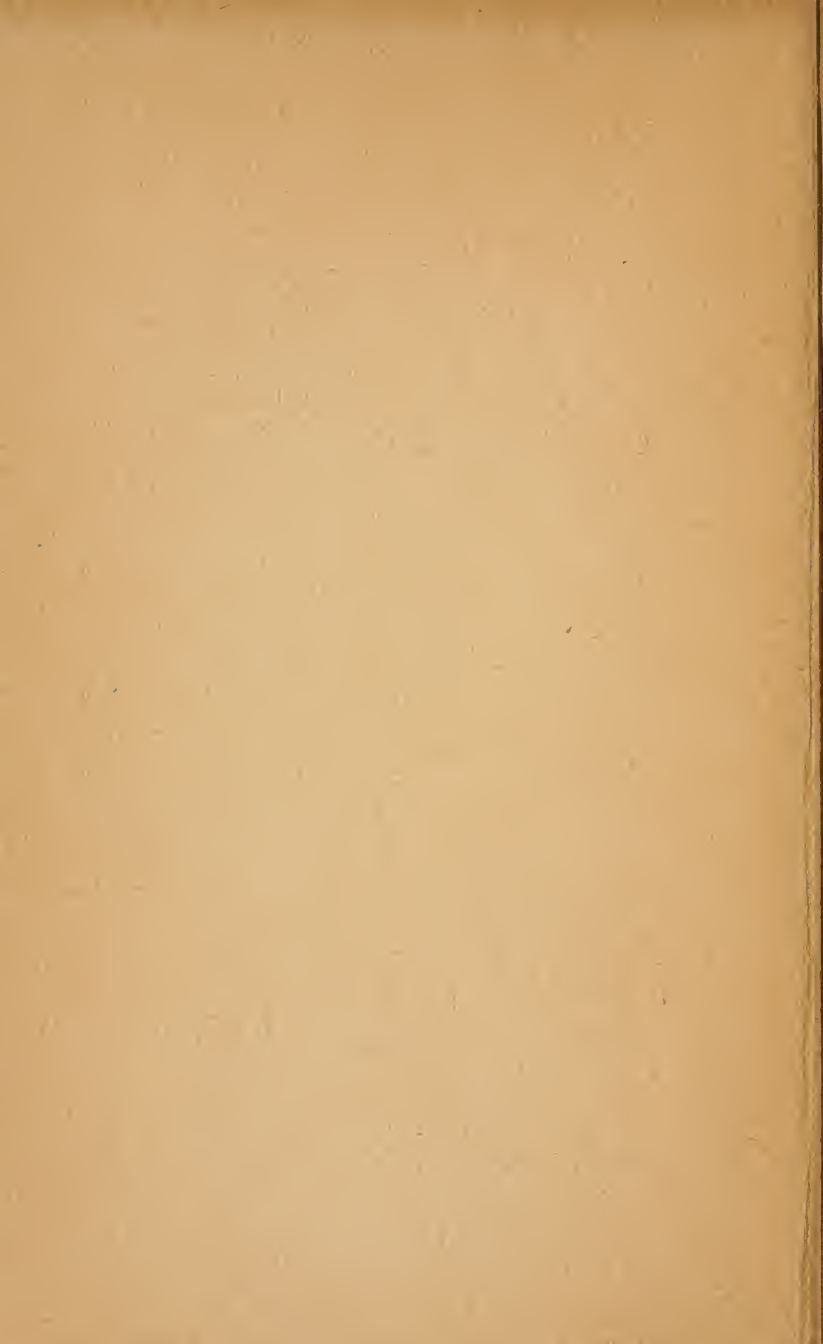
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**INTRODUCTORY : THE MAIN
STRATEGY**



INTRODUCTORY : THE MAIN STRATEGY

THE title of this book requires some explanation, without which, perhaps, the succeeding chapters would fail to give the right perspective. The question which the reader would naturally put to himself is whether we are in the last phase of the war, and, if so, what is the reasoning that leads me to this conclusion. I will try to set forth the arguments for the assumption that we are nearing the end, and the reader can judge for himself whether they are convincing or not.

Before everything, it is necessary to judge this war not merely by its present results, but by the intentions of the enemy. Has he succeeded up to the present, or has he failed? These are the questions which every student of war must ask, for they go

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to the root of the matter. The man who sets out to walk forty miles at a stretch and completes thirty-five has done very well, but he has failed in his original plan all the same. Germany did not begin this war without having a very definite plan and a most elaborate time-table. She had prepared for the conflict a long time ahead. Nothing was left to chance, and as far as the most perfectly organised General Staff, working at their ease, with the great advantage of being able to choose their own moment for striking, could foresee there was no contingency for which ample provision had not been made.

Let us examine closely the German plan of campaign. A good deal more is known about it than most people think. Captured documents and the frank statements of German officers have confirmed the information already in possession of the General Staffs of the Entente. The intention, roughly speaking, was to hold the Russians until the main German forces destroyed the French armies. There was

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no question of making Paris the main objective. The Germans plainly realised that the whole of France, Paris included, would fall into their hands once they had utterly defeated and destroyed its organised defenders. The advent of England into the struggle may not have been foreseen by the German diplomacy, but it was taken into account as a likely contingency by the German General Staff. The Higher Command argued that within the period fixed for the utter defeat of France, the small British Army would hardly matter one way or another. It might, as it did, oblige them to use a few extra corps, but this additional force they always had "up their sleeve" as it were.

Whatever offensive naval operations against France which the German Admiralty had planned, were admittedly frustrated by England's declaration of war. This aspect of our part in helping our gallant French ally has never yet been properly studied. No one would wish to belittle the part played by those

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splendid first divisions of ours, for they have won undying fame in the world and the eternal gratitude of France; but our Navy not merely conveyed the Expeditionary Force, but freed the left flank of the French and British armies from all anxiety. It might be turned on land (and it was very nearly), but it could never be turned from the sea. How far the plans of the German General Staff were dislocated by this we do not know, but we may be quite sure that alternative plans to meet and defeat on land the British intervention were in the pigeon-holes of the German War Office.

The first phase of the war was the defeat of the German General Staff plans, conceived years before and studied in the minutest details. The Boche armies in France were given a definite plan and a definite date when they were to finish their work. By November 21st, 1914—that was the date fixed—it was decreed that the French armies were to be utterly defeated, that France was to be overrun

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and sternly held, and that by the spring or summer of 1915 the Russians were to be brought to their knees. It was to be a short, sharp war, to last eight or nine months.

How these plans were defeated at the Marne we all know, but we do not all know that it was not abandoned by the Germans as impracticable until November 21st. After retreating to the north of the Aisne, the Germans made a wonderful effort to carry out the time-table. Holding the bulk of the French armies in trenches from Alsace to Soissons, they swung round their left in an endeavour to outflank them on the west, and roll them up. They proclaimed to the world that their object was to take Calais, but of course their object remained the same as it was when they invaded Belgium—the defeat and destruction of the enemy forces in France.

The story of the failure of this magnificent effort does not need to be told. At Ypres the British and French forces stayed the onslaught and the position was saved.

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To the day and the hour of the time-table, November 21st, the Germans began to move their divisions east, in spite of the fact that they had failed, and failed badly, to carry out the original scheme. This ends what must be regarded as the first phase in the great war.

The winter of 1914-15 was occupied by the Higher Command in revising completely their war plans. All was not lost in their eyes, because of the failure of their campaign in France. There still remained Russia to be dealt with, and, if possible, to be defeated. Accordingly the attack on her eastern enemy was prepared with Teutonic thoroughness. It must always be borne in mind that it is invariably the object of all military operations to defeat the enemy's forces in the field and render them impotent. Mere gains of territory follow as a result, but are not the main object. This is well set forth by Clausewitz :

“ We have already said that the aim of all action in war is to disarm the enemy,

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and we shall now show that this, theoretically at least, is indispensable.

“If our opponent is to be made to comply with our will, we must place him in a situation which is more oppressive to him than the sacrifice which we demand ; but the disadvantages of this position must naturally not be of a transitory nature, at least in appearance, otherwise the enemy, instead of yielding, will hold out, in the prospect of a change for the better. Every change in this position which is produced by a continuation of the war should therefore be a change for the worse. The worst condition in which a belligerent can be placed is that of being completely disarmed. If, therefore, the enemy is to be reduced to submission by an act of war, he must either be positively disarmed or placed in such a position that he is threatened with it. From this it follows that the disarming or overthrow of the enemy, whichever we call it, must always be the aim of warfare.”

The Germans failed to achieve this in

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their 1915 campaign against Russia. They gained great tracts of territory, obtained innumerable advantages, but, thanks to the skilful handling of the Russian armies, they did not succeed in getting their objective. We may therefore say that it was an abortive campaign.

But it did not mark a distinct phase in the war because the Central Powers still retained the initiative and their enemy was still on the defensive. It is true that both the French and the British undertook offensive operations on the Western Front in 1915. But although we attacked at Neuve Chapelle, and the French in Champagne, in March, the Germans, with their new diabolical gas invention, took the offensive at Ypres with some success. The French made progress and on the Dame de Lorette took Souchez a little after we made the attack at Loos. But all these affairs were of minor importance, though they showed that the British-French armies were not content to remain altogether on the defensive.

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The Central Powers still, however, retained the initiative and the power and will to undertake great offensive operations. The Higher Command having failed to bring Russia to her knees in 1915, devoted the winter to the study of another great movement which, had it been attended with success, would undoubtedly have had very great results. The French armies had been sorely tried, but the growing strength of the British forces had become an increasing cause of anxiety. Falkenhayn, who was at that time Chief of the German General Staff, decided on a very bold attempt to smash right through the French line just where it was considered to be the strongest.

The German attack on Verdun began in February 1916, and lasted some four months. The heroic defence of the French frustrated the intention of the Higher Command, and for his failure Falkenhayn was dismissed and Hindenburg took his place.

We are still too near the chief events of

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this war to be able to see things quite in their proper perspective ; but Verdun stands out unmistakably as the end of the second phase of this awful war. And for two reasons chiefly. It was the last great offensive movement of the German armies in the West, and it proved, beyond all question, that the Frenchman was a better man than the German.

Falkenhayn's conception was not merely bold, but it also had a tinge of genius in it. Verdun had stood the assaults of 1914, and, to a lesser extent, of 1915. It was in the eyes of the French an impregnable position. To force lines of such strength and to beat through the defences in a direct line to the south-west, was calculated to dispirit the whole of the French armies. The boldest course is often the best, and Falkenhayn's thrust was one of magnificent audacity. It failed, not for lack of preparation or of foresight or for any defects in the planning of it, but simply because the French would not give way, whatever the cost. How they stood, and later regained

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all their losses, will be to the glory of France for all time.

But the greater the effort the greater the reaction. Germany tried, and tried hard, and failed. She sought a decision at all costs and found none. Henceforth she was thrown on the defensive, and the initiative passed from her hands into the hands of her enemies. While the fires of Verdun were still smouldering, Sir Douglas Haig and the French launched their great offensive on the Somme.

It was the turning of the tide. It marked the beginning of the last phase. At last England was ready. Guns, munitions, men, were there in plenty to ease the gallant Frenchman of some of his burdens. For the first time the German tasted the quality of the British soldier, no longer hampered by lack of munitions but able to send over shell for shell, and a good deal more. The German took it badly in a few cases, and in all cases showed that, with the tables turned, he was by no means a super-man. It is a curious and remarkable fact

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that from the earliest days of the war (I was near Ypres in 1914) our men never would concede to the German soldier any sort of personal superiority. A sergeant of a battalion that had come out of that awful carnage in the final fighting at Ypres in 1914 some 120 strong, in recounting his adventures, remarked at the end: "But, mind you, sir, we are the better man." Thenceforward one heard it every day.

Now it would be a great mistake to undervalue the qualities of the German soldier. I have frequently seen prisoners come in, and, on looking at their faces, dull, uninspired, and in many cases brutal, the first thought that comes is: "Your discipline exactly suits you." And in this case the first thought is right. These men require and deserve a discipline that no civilised nation would stand. The sense of instant obedience is part of their nature. Kindness from their officers would be misunderstood for weakness. They seem to regard life as an ordered thing. If

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they are ordered to die, they will go and die. If they are ordered to fire on their surrendering comrades they will do it without a qualm. But once the restraint is off, and they are free from the menace of their own officers, they surrender freely and joyously. They are most tractable when captured, and the only difficulty is to keep them from fighting among themselves. With some few exceptions, they hate the war, and those in their own country who are responsible for it. But they will never become revolutionaries. They simply have not got it in them.

But the iron discipline remains. We must make no mistake about it. That discipline is an enormous factor in the fighting, and it makes the German fight stoutly and resolutely. If it ever goes, the German Army will crack up like an empty walnut-shell. But it will continue as long as Germany is ruled as she is at present. The German must be hammered, and well hammered. That is the only thing which appeals to him. We have

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got to make him more frightened of our guns, machine-guns, and men than he is of his officers, and then we may see a *débâcle*.

The third and last phase of the war began with the great Somme battle. The immediate result of it, speaking in military terms, was the retreat on to the Hindenburg Line and the liberation of a large tract of French territory. Always bear in mind this retreat, for it marks a very distinct step in the German *dégringolade*. To go back, in some places, as much as twenty miles, was no triumph for Hindenburg and the Pan-German party in Germany. It was the greatest blow they had received during the war, and it was felt very keenly. In studying the German Press of that period, one came across every now and again an expression of a feeling that was almost despair. But the Press was well drilled and it was claimed as a "Hindenburg trap"—which, by the way, the majority of the German people never believed.

The winter of 1916-17 found the Higher

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Command in Germany *for the first time in the history of the war* devoting their attention mainly to the details of a retreat and the preparation of a defensive warfare. In March 1917 the German Army was stronger than it ever had been since the war began; but, as I have shown, the country was fairly skimmed of its youth and manhood to provide the new battalions. Into the reserves the French and ourselves have eaten pretty largely, and the German losses that have to be made good are very great.

The pace is telling on them. The removal of Bethmann-Hollweg and the appointment of Michaelis are all signs of the enormous strain which presses heavily on Germany. But she is still a strong nation, with great military resources and a fine courage. The only way to bring her to her knees is to beat her armies in the field, and that we are doing handsomely.

We are in the last lap. Russia has been a disappointment to us and a disturber of plans to the Germans. Next year sees the advent of another fresh magnificent

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army. Will the Germans await the American onslaught? And, if she awaits it, can she stand it? It looks as though she were trying to weary France by trying to gain the positions her armies lost in April. But she will never do that, and she has still to meet new attacks. If we will trust and have confidence in our soldiers and will make up our minds to victory, it may come sooner than most of us think. We have a magnificent Army, a splendid and efficient Navy; all that is wanted now is the old bull-dog tenacity of the nation which has brought us victorious peace so often before.

G.

I

MAN BEHIND THE FRONT





I

MAN BEHIND THE FRONT

EVEN the materialistic, brutal, and unimaginative German, the apostle of might, realised long ago that victory can only be achieved by the spirit of the people behind the fighters in the field. All his text-books could be quoted to demonstrate this. Besides, it is so obvious that the national "will to win" is essential for the waging of a victorious war that even he has been bound to recognise it, and does not need the preaching of text-books and military essayists to bring home the importance of it. So it is that, in this third year of the war, when everybody is beginning to feel the strain acutely, that nation only will win which is determined to win, and will lose if fatigue and lassitude undermine its courage.

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e Need
a Spurt.

The British race has never fought better than when it has its back to the wall, but it needs stimulation and encouragement. We passed the worst period of the war in 1914-15. Then, indeed, all the Allies were faced with the possibility of the worst happening. Now we have the Boche beaten, and the nation should realise the fact in order to give support to the armies in the field. We are in the last lap of a long-distance race. We are all puffing a bit, but the German is puffing very hard indeed, and his strength and spirit are not sustained by the fact that he knows that he cannot win.

Our political leaders, not having military knowledge, have not yet realised that we are winning, so they cannot stimulate the nation to the great final spurt which we must soon begin to make. I hope, in the course of these articles, to prove conclusively that the Boche is being well beaten and that the path to complete victory is not a long one. There is nothing so fatal to us as a nation as a stupid and

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blind optimism, but there is also nothing so misleading and depressing as a malignant pessimism.

The first stages of our victorious march began last year on the Somme. That great series of battles drove the Germans back on to the Hindenburg Line. And yet there were people in England who said there was no Hindenburg Line. Our enemy knew in October last that he could not hang on, though it was not till early spring this year that he went back finally. So to-day, he knows quite well that he cannot stand any more blows like those of Arras and Messines. He is a groggy boxer leaning on the ropes for support. It is our duty to spare not an ounce of strength in order to give him the knock-out blow.

We at home are still inclined to look for the military results of the old times of mobile armies and open warfare. To out-flank and out-manceuvre an enemy so that he was bound to be smashed or run away is impossible to-day. But the principles of strategy remain the same. They are simple.

The New
Warfare.

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The object of a commander is to concentrate superior forces at a decisive point and destroy the enemy armies. In the old days this could be accomplished as a result of two or three weeks' manœuvring. It takes longer to-day.

But we are following the same old principles, which never alter, although the execution is different. We at home are apt to count results by miles or yards. This is utterly wrong. If we attack the enemy on a front of a thousand yards in a line of trenches 100 yards away and drive him out of them, we have achieved a victory. When this is done on a larger scale on a front of nine miles and a depth of two we have achieved a great victory, and if our losses are one-third of the enemy's (as they were at Messines) we are dealing him one of the decisive blows of the war.

To break through the enemy's line is now recognised on both sides as a most difficult and even dangerous enterprise. We have long ago given up trying to do so, but we

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are trying to break the men who are holding the line, and in that particular project we are having conspicuous and constant success. The reasons which make it difficult to smash through the enemy, scatter him right and left, and get behind his remaining lines are not obvious, perhaps, to those who have not studied the present phase of warfare. Both lines are in trenches, holding many positions stronger than Port Arthur. To drive men out of these trenches requires an enormous artillery preparation, which breaks up the country in a way which cannot be described.

Suppose, for example, that the first assault—as, indeed, it has frequently happened—smashes up the enemy divisions in front of it and drives them headlong to the rear. It would seem a heaven-sent opportunity for pursuit, but it is nothing of the kind. The German is retreating, or, rather, running away, to a rear well supplied with good roads, light and heavy railways. He is going back to his reserves of men and munitions; we are leaving ours behind.

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Before we can take full advantage of our success we must build roads, railways and sometimes make bridges. All this requires time, and when we are ready to push on we are face to face with a new, formidable position and new reserves of men and guns.

This being so, the reader will no doubt ask himself what is the use of such attacks. Well, in the first place all our assaults have the effect of lowering the *moral* of the enemy. But they have another and more practical result. Take a pencil and draw a straight line. Divide it into ten equal parts. Each division represents five miles of front. Take a pair of compasses and at any one of the five mile points draw a semi-circle, with a radius of five miles, on the enemy's side of the line. This will represent the result of a big push.

But if you will study this dent with an eye to artillery positions you will see that the old line which the Germans still hold becomes liable to enfilade (or side-way) fire as well as fire from the front. In the result the enemy has to give way and make

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the gap in his line bigger and bigger, and ultimately is obliged to withdraw altogether to a line far in the rear. This is what happened at the Somme, as will be seen from Sir Douglas Haig's admirable dispatch.

An objection will at once be made to this description that our gap (or salient) in the enemy's line offers exactly the same advantage to him in this matter of frontal and enfilade fire. But here come in British airmen, British infantry—the best in the world—and, above all, British artillery predominance. The Boche can, and does, make things in our salient uncomfortable for us, but we are not long before we “get on top of him” and are left more or less quiet to smash up his remaining lines.

Let us look at the state of affairs at the present time. Last year the enemy had on the Western front 120 divisions. Of these he put into and withdrew from the battle line ninety-seven from July 1st to the end of November. In the month of July he had used (and partially used up) thirty-four divisions; in August, eighteen.

This Year's
Results.

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That is to say, that last year in two months he had placed in the battle line, and drawn out, mauled and reduced, fifty-two divisions. This year, counting two months' offensive, French and British, from April 9th to June 9th, he has already used up and withdrawn 110 divisions out of 157.

Now these are two facts which nothing can controvert. There is no secret about them. They are well known to both sides. And surely this can be described as encouraging.

The Russian position has one great advantage. It is an uncertain one. This may have inconveniences for Russia's Allies, but it is also very embarrassing to the Central Powers. No plan can be made on the basis of Russians "standing pat," nor yet on their making an offensive, with the result that the Boche has not been able to take any considerable amount of troops away from the Eastern front.

What he has done is to exchange indifferent divisions on the Western front for good divisions from the Eastern. He

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has also sent some artillery from Russia. The new formations, however, which he has been busy preparing in the winter are nearly all on our and the French front. We may conclude from this, therefore, that Russia is immobilising a considerable German force. When she decides on an offensive her task will be comparatively easy.

The stages in the progress which the British Armies in France have made can be clearly defined. First comes Neuve Chapelle, then Loos, then the Somme, then the Scarpe, and the Ancre, then Vimy and Arras, and lastly, Messines. Every one of these was a lesson in the art of the particular kind of warfare we are now waging.

British
Tactical
Progress.

We are a curious and incomprehensible race. We will never make preparations; we wait for disaster to be upon us. We sit down and say that everything will be all right in a few weeks, and then, to use the expression of a Canadian officer, "when our noses have been rubbed in it" we

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suddenly turn to and improvise most perfectly, more perfectly, indeed, than many other nations who have been preparing for generations. It is wonderful, heartbreaking, and expensive, but somehow we "get there."

Go and ask German officers and even prisoners what they think. They began gas ; we have gone better, and our gas and anti-gas arrangements are more complete and more efficient than any that the Boche possesses. He began with a great and powerful artillery ; we beat him hollow. His counter-battery work is miles behind ours. We beat him in the air, we beat him in mines, we beat him in all scientific appliances, we beat him in his strongest point—organisation. His staff work is not now to be compared with ours. There is not a single position in his possession which we cannot take from him at less cost than he can defend it. He is a beaten man. His moral is shaky, and only his discipline remains. He is fighting a hopeless fight, and he knows it, but our

MAN BEHIND THE FRONT

good people at home have not yet realised it.

Here, indeed, is a phenomenon worthy of study. The nearer a man approaches the firing line the greater enthusiasm and confidence he finds. Men who are marching into the line, as well as those who are leaving it, display a spirit of such glorious courage and belief in victory that the most determined pessimist becomes a changed man.

As soon as I landed in England on my return I found the opposite spirit. It was not exactly depression. Perhaps "war weariness" is the best term to use. But it was a marked contrast to the breezy air of belief in an early victory which characterises the men at the front.

Pondering over this, I came to the conclusion that the reason for this curious difference in spirit between the Man Behind the Front and the Front-Line Man lies in the fact that the *fighter knows* he has the Boche down, while the people at home have their doubts. It will be my task

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to try and prove to them that, given certain essentials, such as men and material (guns and ammunition), and, above all, the determined "will to win" of the British race, victory is as certain as to-morrow's sun.

II

HOW WE STAND IN THE WEST



II

HOW WE STAND IN THE WEST

THE obvious necessity for secrecy, so that the enemy can gain no advantage by the indiscretions of newspapers or speakers, has one very serious defect. It renders it very difficult to bring home to the people at home the true state of affairs and tends to encourage the spreading of pessimistic and untrue rumours. For example, on my return home from the front, I was told by two or three people who should know better that our own men suffered terribly from the effects of the mines that were exploded on the Messines battle front. The statement that not a single British life was lost by the mines was met with stupid and unreasonable incredulity.

There is yet another reason why a great

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deal of information is withheld, and that is the ineradicable modesty of the soldiers. While we were having the worst of it, generals and men smiled grimly, but they smiled. They did not hide the seriousness of affairs, but they never lost their courage. Now that we are winning, they are the last men in the world to boast about it. So I must do it for them.

e Results
Air
premacv.

How do we stand in the Western Front ? Last year we fought many desperate battles on the Somme, learning a lesson each time, and this year we have attacked and secured with comparative ease the two dominant positions which the enemy possessed along the old line. Nothing seems impossible now. Scientific preparation, wonderful staff work, great artillery predominance, and an incomparable infantry, enable us to contemplate without fear the undertaking of any enterprise. The men who do the work have perfect confidence in the superior direction of affairs, and they go forward with the certainty of a cheap victory.

HOW WE STAND IN THE WEST

Let me explain why this is. This war was initiated by the German, who put his trust mainly in his gigantic machines of war, which he had brought to perfection. From the beginning he knew that, man for man, the British soldier was the better man. Therefore he had to trust to his machines. We began, late as usual, to follow him, but now we have caught him up and passed him. To-day our artillery supremacy is undoubted.

I am often asked why it is that if we can take positions of great strength from the Germans they cannot do the same to us. The reason is that we never allow them to develop an offensive because of our gun and gunnery superiority. We owe this in the first place to our airmen, those magnificent examples of British manhood who, whether they are flying in an old observation "bus" or a new 130-mile-an-hour machine, go for the enemy wherever they see him. At any time we like, and at any part of the line we choose, we can secure full air supremacy, so that

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not a single Boche airman dares show his nose.

In this way, for the purposes of a "push" we simply deprive the Boche of his air observation and restrict him to his observation posts in the line. It must not be argued from this that a German machine is never seen over our lines. He pays frequent visits, and some little time ago several of them swooped down on a couple of British batteries and emptied their machine-gun belts on our gunners, without, I am glad to say, inflicting any casualties.

Again, you will not infrequently see a Boche machine come over our line for observation. But for every one that crosses into our territory twenty of ours cross over their line and fight their splendid battles in their territory. The great thing, however, is that whenever and wherever we like we can secure full air supremacy over the Boche.

Our Artillery.

Given this greater power of air observation, it stands to reason that the army with

HOW WE STAND IN THE WEST

eyes must beat the army without them. And so it has come about that our counter-battery work has succeeded almost beyond expectation. For the uninitiated I would like to explain that counter-battery work is the destruction of the enemy's batteries by our artillery.

The Germans, too, have a counter-battery system, but it is not effective because of lack of observation, and for other reasons. Still, a few days before the Battle of Messines, the Boche artillery deliberately challenged ours to a duel. It was a hot and fierce fight—perhaps the greatest artillery fight in the war. During four days it was carried on with great pluck and daring by the Germans and with splendid tenacity by us. Gradually we drew ahead and achieved the victory.

There are abundant indications that the Germans are short of guns or ammunition, or of both. We know from prisoners that the wastage of guns is greater than the production, but I have had ocular demonstration of the fact that they are compelled to

German
Shortage.

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remain inactive even while being pounded by us.

This, however, must not be exaggerated. Along the line, in certain places, the Germans have massed a great deal of artillery. But they certainly have skinned the rest of their line to do so. I witnessed two small attacks in certain portions of our line where we had arranged local attacks to straighten our line after artillery preparation. In each case our guns with wonderful accuracy bombarded the first and second line, as well as the communication trenches. Not a gun was fired in return.

I asked the explanation, and in each case it was the same. "Either they are short of guns or they are afraid of our observation, and dare not fire them." But think how demoralising it must be for the German infantry to have to undergo such punishment without their gunners being able to reply. No wonder German infantry and gunners when they meet in our cages take to fisticuffs.

HOW WE STAND IN THE WEST

Our counter-battery work never ceases. Every day there are "shoots." An enemy battery is detected and located, and it is then engaged. A "shoot" is the result. Now a "shoot" means that suddenly, and without warning, anything from 150 to 500 heavys shells are turned on an enemy battery. Remember, too, that modern artillery is, as a rule, most accurate, and, whenever it is inaccurate, it is corrected by our air observation.

Our Counter-
Battery
Work.

What happens to a battery which undergoes this process? Sometimes by a sort of miracle, the guns remain untouched, but in the vast majority of cases guns and gun pits are obliterated. I, who have seen the results, can attest to the terrible destruction which is wrought by a "shoot."

Now let us go further and consider how many of these "shoots" we have had from the beginning of January. We have located nearly 5,000 German batteries since January 1st this year, and we have *observed* direct hits on over 4,000 gun pits, besides

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blowing up battery ammunition dumps in nearly 1,000 cases.

But what the reader, no doubt, would most like to know is how many German guns have been destroyed. Here there is a discrepancy in calculation. The modest soldier will not allow more than 20 per cent. of direct hits to represent guns destroyed, but my experience on the Somme last year, when our counter-battery work was not so perfect as it is now, leads me to the belief that 32 per cent. is a fair estimate—some 1,280 Boche guns destroyed in twenty-three weeks. Not a bad record. And this, of course, does not include the splendid work of the French.

III
OUR INFANTRY



III

OUR INFANTRY

NAPOLEON once said that the British infantry was the best in the world. It is true to-day. What is the quality that makes them such incomparable soldiers I do not know. They are fearless, resolute, eager in attack, and determined in defence. They are disciplined to a wonderful degree, yet with a perfect understanding between officer and man.

When things are going well the soldier will "grouse" and grumble and give the appearance of being in a state of incipient mutiny. Give him a nasty wet day, a German *strafe*, and a generally depressing atmosphere, and he begins to sing and laugh and show the qualities of Mark Tapley.

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He must have perfect confidence in his leaders and he adores his natural protectors, the airmen and the gunners. Some people who have studied him will tell you that a good many of his qualities must be due to lack of imagination. That may be so.

On the other hand, he must have imagination to invent some of the nicknames he has given his generals. From the first day of the war he established a man-for-man superiority over the German. He felt himself the better man and lived up to this conviction, in spite of the machine superiority which the Boche possessed at the beginning of the war. He does not deny to his enemy both courage and endurance, but he is none the less convinced that he can beat him when he likes.

the Infantry
qualities.

He is careless and insouciant. He is careless of his own life, and will often risk it most unnecessarily, as, for example, when he searches for souvenirs under a heavy shell fire.

Not long ago we took a batch of prisoners,

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and as there was a fairly hot German barrage behind us they were put for safety in one of our trenches. A British officer who was standing by them overheard and understood what they were saying. One of them tried to encourage the others by saying that there would soon be a counter-attack, which would result in their rescue. "Never," emphatically returned one of his prisoners. "We'll never beat these fellows. Look there!"—and he pointed to some of our men calmly searching for souvenirs under the German barrage; "did you ever see a German soldier above ground, if he could help it, when shelling was on? Those fellows don't mind anything, and they have no nerves. We can never beat them."

But not only is our infantryman a splendid fighter. He is the most chivalrous man alive. A poor fright-stricken Boche of eighteen years remained hidden in dug-outs for four or five days after a big assault. He was found shivering and shaking and starving by the salvage men, who gave

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him what food and water they had and then took him to the rear.

[Passing near a battery, the gunners took charge of him, sent him down in a dug-out, and stuffed him with bread and meat and tea and jam till the poor fellow looked as though he would die of the surfeit. And then they put in a claim to keep him as a "mascot," but regulations forbade and he had to be sent to the rear, well out of shell fire.

His Ways.

The great quality which stands out is the marvellous buoyancy of the man. He will go through the most awful hell for a week and comes out of it with a smile. After a wash and a brush-up in billets he will be kicking a football about or exchanging confidences in his curious French with the natives. He will mow, reap, or plough for the French peasant, look after the cow, or wash the baby, if he is allowed.

He is the most perfect gentleman and no boaster. He will cheer up his people at home with stories of adventure which he has never had, but when he really has gone

OUR INFANTRY

through a big assault as often as not he will dismiss it all with a curt "I went over the top last Thursday."

But those who love him—and who does not?—find him at his best as a linguist. Even here his ingenuity comes to his aid. Who but he could have translated "Your cow has broken loose" by the short but quite easily comprehended phrase, "*Madame, lait promenade*"?

Two men were billeted on a farmhouse where there was a good deal of poultry. Naturally they wanted to have a chicken for their dinner, but their vocabulary was limited, and the French word for "chicken" wasn't in it. After deep consideration one of them had an inspiration. Taking an egg he said to the good woman of the house, "Oofs' mamma." It was thoroughly understood, and they dined well.

One could go on for ever on this subject, but I cannot miss this. A soldier had successfully wooed a French girl, and asked the chaplain to perform the marriage ceremony. "But," said the chaplain, "the

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girl is a Roman Catholic." "Oh, that's all right, sir," said the man, whose French ran only to "*Bon jour*" and "*Napoo*," "I've converted her."

I would like to put our "dismal Jimmies" at home by the side of a battalion coming out of or going into the line. These fresh English faces, their clear, humorous eye, and their invariable look of splendid confidence are enough to make you want to stand at the side of the road and cheer them till you are hoarse. Go among them and hear them talk. You wouldn't find depression there. "Seven times over the top and still going strong," said one of them to me with an air of pride.

If they are asked about the Boche they smile good-humouredly and with just a touch of scorn. The idea of the German whining now that he is "getting some of his own back" seems to account for the scorn. Many of the brave fellows were in the trenches in the hard old days at the beginning of the war, when the enemy sent over forty shells for every one of ours.

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They didn't whine then, and they don't admire the Boche for whining now.

Coming along a dusty French road in 'a A Grumble motor-car I was delighted to give a Canadian officer a lift. He had been in most of the "shows," had started as a private, and was now a captain. He was of the right mettle, full of courage and determination to drive the Boche back to his lair. I complimented him on the gallantry which he and his countrymen had shown during the war. "Sir," he said to me, much to my surprise, "why will you always treat us as children? We have done well. I don't deny it, but everybody has done well. Your Tommy is the finest fighter on God's earth. Isn't he going to get any of the credit? I'm sick to death of the praise that is plastered all over us. We have done our duty to the best of our ability, but we don't deserve one word more of praise than your fine fighting-men."

This sentiment, on inquiry, I found to be common to all the Colonial forces. One

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distinguished Australian officer said that he had come to hate the word "Anzac."
"We came into the war of our own accord to beat the German. We don't want to be treated as though we should give up the fight unless we were mentioned every day. We are good, stout fighters, as the Boche knows well, but we take off our hats to gallant old regiments of the Home Country. Believe me, an infantry battalion is simply a miniature of the race."

Discipline
and
Rewards.

The discipline of our armies in France is strict and stern, as it has to be in face of such an enemy as they have to fight. But it is tempered by a wonderful *camaraderie* between officer and man. The casual observer would see nothing except the outward and visible signs of discipline and order. But the moment one mixes with a battalion or a battery it is not difficult to see that the relations between the men and their officers are cordial and prompted by mutual self-respect.

I dare say a quarter of the younger officers serving in France were privates in

OUR INFANTRY

the early days of the war. Indeed, there are several battalion commanders who were non-commissioned officers three short years ago. The consequence is that, without any relaxation of discipline, there is a "give and take" between men and officers which is delightful to see. A boy officer with an ample dinner awaiting him at his billet will risk a Court-martial by storming at a "brass-hat" because his men haven't got hot water. In one division I know of the staff gave up their leave in order to allow some men who had not been home for a long time to have an opportunity of seeing their kith and kin.

There is, however, one grumble among the fighting units at the front which is almost universal. While they readily admit the magnificent work done behind the line, they do ask almost unanimously for a purely fighting decoration to be given only for good work done under fire.

The Military Cross in some respects did satisfy this grievance, but it has been given to men at the bases. It must not be

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imagined for a moment that the man in the trenches does not fully appreciate that without the man behind he could do very little. But it is not unnatural that when he earns reward under fire the decoration awarded to him should plainly indicate to the outside world that it was won in the fighting line.

Padre.

When the solemn moments arrive and the men are waiting in tense and poignant expectation, though there may be many a joke, there is also a great seriousness. I love the picture painted to me of the late Maurice Peel, chaplain to a battalion of a great Welsh regiment.

As they stood in the trench waiting for the attack that fearless man sent messages along the line, giving them the great courage of purpose. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," said he, and down the line went the message, "The *Padre* says, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.'" And again, "The *Padre* says, 'Christ said 'It is I, be not afraid.''" And the

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last message, "The *Padre* says, 'Jesus said "I am with you always,"' " and then over the top to death or glory. And among the dead that day was the gallant *Padre*.



IV
MESSINES



IV

MESSINES

HISTORY is not always impartial, but it has to take cognisance of facts. An earthquake is a fact. So was the battle of Messines. I do not refer to the mines, but to the battle itself. The British public have had most admirable accounts of the fighting from the correspondents at the front, so it is their own fault if they have not realised its true import. I would like, however, to emphasise some portions of their descriptions of this great success in order to give it the true proportion.

In the first place it was a triumph of A Great Staff Staff work. But more than anything else Triumph. it was a pitched battle between the best brains on the German Staff and our own. Remember that our preparations were

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known to the Boche months before. The actual date of the assault was perhaps unknown. From German prisoners we have learnt that it was not expected by their officers before the 9th; it actually took place on June 7th.

The enemy possessed very solid advantages. In the first place he was not surprised; in the second place he held all the high ground and all observation. Before the great ridge lay a plain on which every movement could be clearly seen from the hundreds of concreted observation posts of the enemy. We had to dig gun pits and bring up guns under his very nose. So secure, indeed, did he feel that for the first time in the later stages of the war he deliberately challenged us, as I have already described, to an artillery duel, in which he was worsted. This was our first triumph.

But he had still other advantages. His General Staff had all through the winter studied the principles of defensive warfare. *En parenthèse*, it is somewhat significant

MESSINES

that the Germans, who believe, and rightly believe, that the offensive alone can give victory, should have devoted so much time to the elaboration of a phase of warfare which, according to their own great authorities, can only mean defeat. But be that as it may, it is an undoubted fact that the German forces in front of Messines had been rehearsing the defence, just as our people had been rehearsing the attack. They had provided for every contingency. Rules were laid down for every arm.

Here is an interesting document found on a dead soldier. It was evidently part of some general handbook issued by the Higher Command. It has particular interest for us, since it refers to our own particular invention—the Tank.

“ *Engagement of Tanks.*—Artillery action against the enemy’s tanks is of great importance in view of the novelty of the arm and the small experience of it which we have so far gained. Destructive and barrage fire directed against hollows, roads,

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and the enemy's position will be carried out by infantry guns and close-range guns which fire by direct laying at point-blank ranges. They are supplied with a special shell for this. It is important that these guns should not open fire too soon, in order to remain concealed and be still in action when needed. In addition to these guns, heavy howitzer batteries should be detailed to engage tanks. They will have particular sectors allowed to them for targets, such as strips of ground close in our front which they can keep under observation, and on which they must register when conditions are quiet. If a tank enters such a sector all the guns should be laid on to it, and salvos fired till it is out of action. Nothing but a thoroughly organised bombardment such as this will be successful against tanks. General orders that all batteries should fire when a tank is seen only lead to confusion and failure. In exceptional cases heavy flat-trajectory guns, firing with direct laying and observation, may be used if tanks have broken through our lines."

MESSINES

This is but one example of the thoroughness with which the enemy prepared for our attack on the Messines range. We have information from prisoners that, after many rehearsals and a thorough examination of the position by experts of the Higher Command, it was pronounced impregnable. But, in addition, so anxious was the enemy to retain the ridge, that orders of the most formal nature were issued that it was to be defended to the last man. Indeed, everything that the German Staff could think of was done to defeat our attack utterly and with great loss. It was a pitched battle between the German and British Staffs, the best military brains on each side. The planning and counter-planning was deliberate, so that surprise could be no excuse.

In the result we beat the German with an ease, celerity, and completeness that has dumbfounded him and lowered his *moral*. The enemy, too, while using his best brains, neglected nothing in the way of *matériel*. It is well to bear in mind that only a couple of months ago he had gained

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full experience of our Staff work on the Vimy Heights, and therefore was bound to profit by any lessons he may have learned there. Masses of artillery were gathered together, and all parts of the line were denuded in order to meet our onslaught. His ammunition was plentiful, too, for he realised the decisive nature of the fight and spared nothing in his endeavour to turn the tables on us.

the Enemy
losses.

What were his losses in this battle? I should say [after careful computation] that they were at least three times as many as ours.

The mines undoubtedly inflicted many casualties. I can give a single instance. The Canadians, who had mined Hill 60, had every reason to be proud of their work. After the explosion had taken place a German officer was found stunned some distance from the mine. He was brought to the rear and gradually recovered. He told his rescuers that at the time of the explosion there were on the hill two field pioneer companies, as well as the ordinary

garrison. A German pioneer field company is about 260 strong. The garrison probably was a battalion strong. We may therefore count the casualties in this mine alone as about 1,270—all killed. The fact that they were killed was confirmed by the officer who was taken to the prisoners' cage in that sector and confessed that he could not see a single man of either the pioneer companies.

That the mines have had a tremendous moral effect upon the enemy is undoubted, for the German Press is beginning to explain how unlikely it is that there will be a repetition. It is carefully pointed out that the lie of the ground was particularly favourable to British mining operations, and stress is laid on the idea that the "new British position has the decided disadvantage that there can be now no further thought of mine explosions." This may be comforting for the people at home, but the Germans in the front line have had such a shaking that they imagine mines everywhere. Our splendid mining com-

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panies will no doubt see to it that they are not disappointed.

"Band of
brothers."

It would give a totally wrong impression of our armies at the front if the success at Messines were attributed to A, B, or C. The Army Commanders are a band of brothers working with splendid loyalty under Sir Douglas Haig. If an offensive is in preparation the General who is preparing it has freely at his disposal all the experiences of his colleagues in former assaults.

The gravity of the issue and the tremendous responsibility which falls upon an Army Commander have driven away all the little petty jealousies of former wars. Everyone works cordially and ungrudgingly with his fellows. "To beat the Boche" is their battle-cry, and whether it is A, B, or C who gives a smashing blow his fellow-commanders are as pleased as though they had done it themselves.

The German
Version.

I hope I have shown that the Battle of Messines was the culmination of a long, strenuous preparation on both sides. All that brain, energy, and courage could do

MESSINES

was done, and the Boche was well drubbed. But great as the effects of the victory are bound to be I am inclined to think that the greatest of all was the German *communiqué*. That told a tale almost of panic. Remember that our plans were so admirably thought out that there was not a single hitch of any kind or sort whatever.

The whole thing worked like a play that had been rehearsed for years. Everybody knew his place and objective, and not a section was out of line. The whole of the German armies from Verdun to the sea were looking to the result. They all knew of our offensive and of the preparation made to defeat it. On our side, too, every man knew of the coming "push" and waited eagerly for the news. Here are the British and German versions :

GERMAN VERSION.

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS,

June 8th, 1917.

WESTERN FRONT.—ARMY
GROUP OF CROWN PRINCE
RUPPRECHT :

On the Coast and Yser

BRITISH VERSION.

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS,

FRANCE.

June 7th, 11.5 a.m.

We attacked at 3.10 a.m.
this morning the German
positions on the Messines-

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GERMAN VERSION (*contd.*)—

front the activity continued to be slight.

The attacks carried out by the English north of Armentières, after a destructive bombardment between Ypres and Ploegsteert Wood lasting for days were repulsed south-east of Ypres by Lower Silesian and Württemberg Regiments. Also on the southern wing of the battlefield we fought with success.

On the other hand, the enemy succeeded in pressing forward beyond Wytschaete and Messines after stubborn swaying fights, having broken into our positions by the use of numerous mine explosions. A powerful counter-attack by Guards and Bavarian Regiments threw the enemy back on Messines.

Further north his advance was halted by our fresh reserves. Later on, our bravely fighting regiments were withdrawn out of the salient, which curved towards the west, into a previously prepared position between the knee of the canal north of Stollebeke and the Douve ground,

BRITISH VERSION (*contd.*)—

Wytschaete Ridge on a front of over nine miles.

We have everywhere captured our first objectives, and further progress is reported to be satisfactory along the whole front of attack.

Numbers of prisoners are reported already to be reaching collecting stations.

9.50 p.m.

Our operations south of Ypres have been continued methodically throughout the day, and have been attended by complete success.

The Messines-Wytschaete Ridge, which for over two and a half years has dominated our positions in the Ypres salient, was stormed by our troops this morning.

In this attack we captured the villages of Messines and Wytschaete and the enemy's defence systems, including many strongly organised woods and defended localities on a front of over nine miles from south of La Douve Brook to north of Mont Sorrel.

Later in the day our troops again moved forward, in accordance with the plan of operations, and

MESSINES

GERMAN VERSION (*contd.*)—

two kilometres west of Warneton.

On the Arras front the artillery activity increased in several sectors.

BRITISH VERSION (*contd.*)—

carried the village of Oost-taverne and the enemy's rearward defence system east of the village on a front of over five miles.

In the course of this advance an attempted counter-attack against the southern portion of our new positions was completely broken up by our artillery fire.

The enemy's casualties in to-day's fighting have been heavy.

In addition to his other losses, up to 4.30 p.m. this afternoon over 5,000 German prisoners had passed through our collecting stations. Others have still to be brought in.

We have also captured a number of guns and many trench mortars and machine-guns, which have not yet been counted.

The effect of such a *communiqué* sent throughout the world, and also to the German armies in the West, may have been useful in the one case, but it was downright demoralising in the other. The Boche should really "temper the wind to the shorn lamb." He can tell what lies

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he likes to the people at home, but he should not lie to his armies.

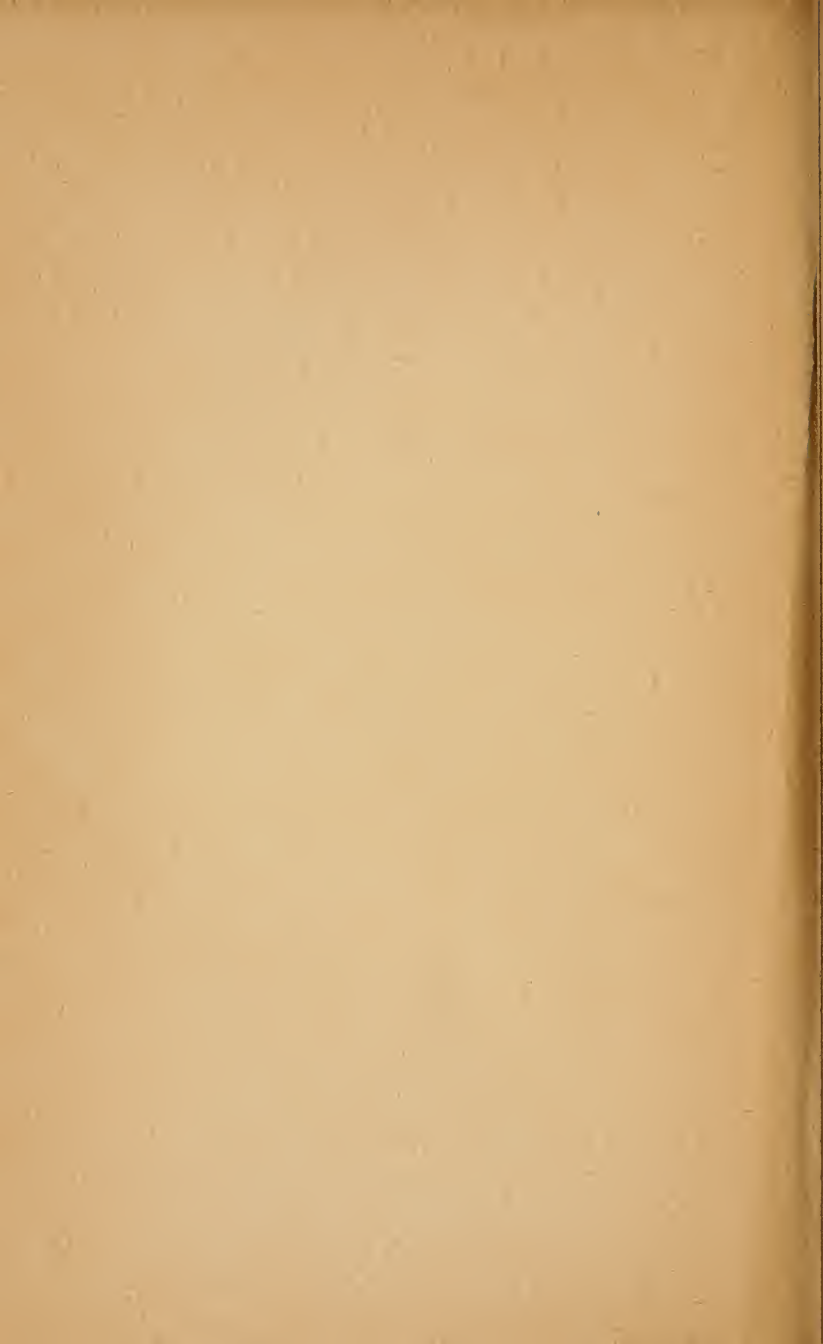
A German officer taken prisoner in another part of the line said to his captor : " We got it in the neck up at Messines, from all accounts." The Englishman, fresh from the perusal of the German *communiqué*, pointed out that his own Government evidently considered it only a trifling reverse.

" But nobody believes our *communiqués*," was the frank reply. " You see, the whole of us knew of Messines and were waiting for news. Long before the *communiqué* reached us the real truth had come down the line from mouth to mouth, and we knew we had been badly beaten. Nobody takes any notice of *communiqués*."

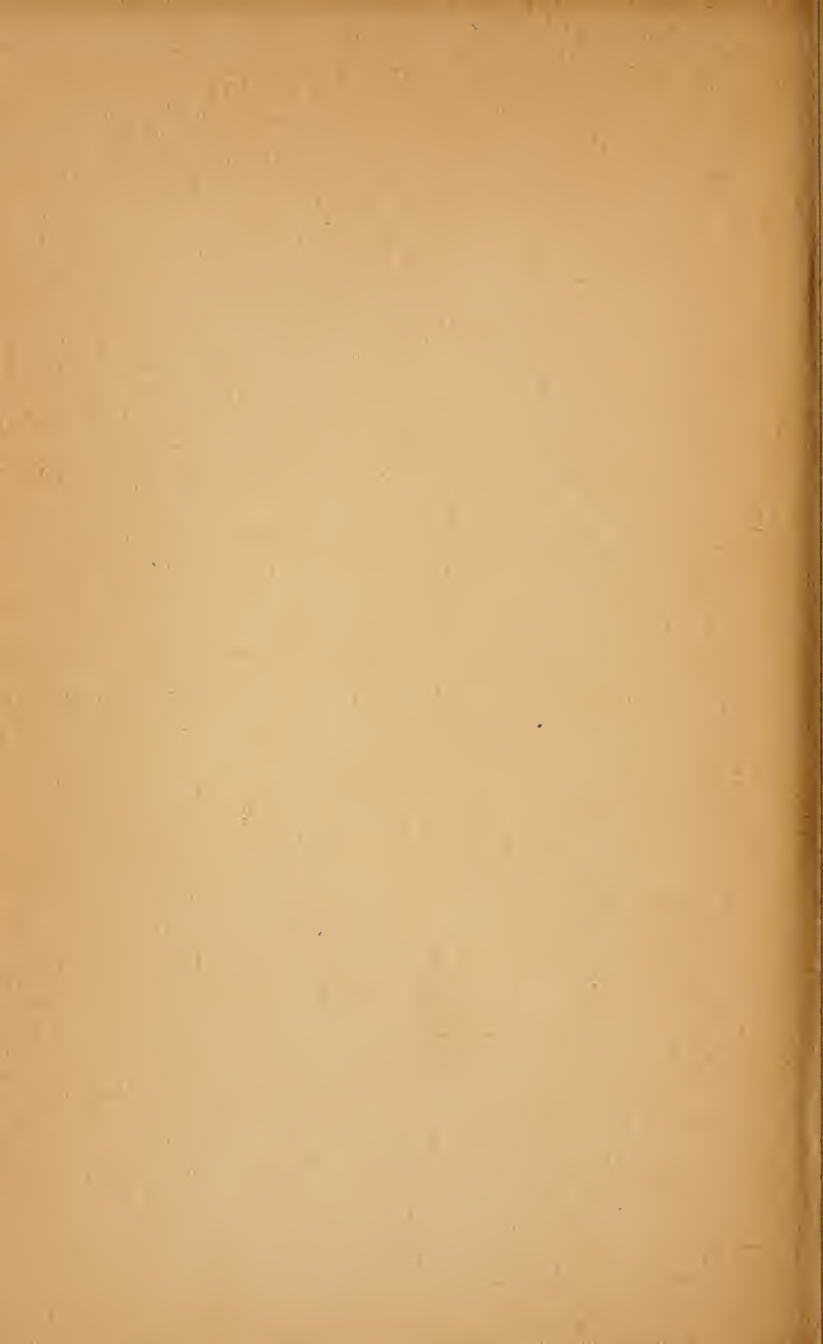
One more quotation, from the speech of a Bavarian officer taken in the fight, and I have done with the Battle of Messines, which marks a decisive stage in the history of this war. The prisoner in question was caught in a dug-out and brought to the rear. One remark of his to a British officer

and repeated to me has remained strong in my memory.

“Oh, yes,” he said, “you have given us the worst beating we have ever had. It was a real trial of strength, and you won. But how do you expect our men to fight? They are fighting now for the *status quo*. How do you expect men to go to death for a thing like the *status quo*?”



V
GERMAN MAN-POWER



V

GERMAN MAN-POWER

IT will readily be allowed that the question of man-power dominates all others. Upon it, given endurance and courage in the nations behind, will depend victory or a stale-mate peace. The Germans give very few indications of their losses, but we know that they must be tremendous. We know the losses of our gallant Allies, Russia and France, as well as our own, and from them, especially in the later stages of the war, we can form a very shrewd idea of the cost to Germany of the war in men. I admit that it is almost impossible to give exact figures, and those that I bring forward must be regarded in the nature of a guess.

Still, they are the result of careful inquiry of men who should have some know-

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ledge of the subject, and I have struck the average of the different computations. In killed, died of wounds, prisoners, or men wounded beyond possibility of returning to the front, I am not exaggerating, I think, when I say Germany has lost 4,000,000 men.

The New
German
Army.

At the end of 1916 we may say that the Germans possessed a force of 5,500,000 of all ranks, not counting recruits in training. In August, 1914, the German Army had doubled its peace strength. In February, 1915, it was trebled, and now consists of some 2,000 infantry battalions, or about 230 divisions, of which about 150 are on the Western front. The figure for all ranks which I have given does not, of course, represent fighting men, but includes all subsidiary and non-combatant services. For instance, if the Germans employed women clerks in the invaded territories they would be used.

In the latter part of 1916 the Higher Command in Germany formed about one hundred new battalions. These do not

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represent fresh troops altogether. They were raised in various ways. In certain Army Corps districts a company at full war strength was formed of the Ersatz (or replacing) battalion, and these were collected together to form new regiments. It is as well to explain that a regiment represents three battalions, and thus in full war strength, as at the beginning of the war, could be reckoned at 3,000 men.

Another method of raising new battalions was to withdraw a company from every infantry regiment in a great number of divisions in the field to form new regiments. These companies, however, were often replaced by drafts from the depôts at home. As a result of all this shuffling and re-shuffling some thirty new divisions were raised by the end of 1916. In the early part of 1915 new divisions were raised on the basis of three regiments to a division instead of four. This, of course, released a good number of staff officers, who were drafted to the new divisions.

Signs of
German
Weakness.

Reading these somewhat intricate figures,

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we still fail to find out how far the wastage of the war is affecting the fighting strength of the German armies in the field. There are, however, certain facts which indicate that they are beginning to feel the need for men.

But first of all let us examine the German system of recruiting before the war. Under the law (expanded by the Act of September 9th, 1915) every male German between the ages of seventeen and forty-five was liable to military service. Liability to service in the *Active Army*, however, did not begin till he was twenty years of age. At that age, if he were declared fit, he was passed to the *depôt* of the unit to which he had been allotted. Thus a man born in March, 1894, was called a man of the 1914 class.

The Germans began the war with men of the 1913 class, twenty-one years of age. In the years 1911, 1912, and 1913 the classes called up of a military age for service in the *Active Army* were respectively 563,024, 587,608, 587,888. These, however,

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did not represent all that were fit. Fifteen per cent. of the whole were pronounced fit, but were not required, and were posted to the Ersatz Reserve. Twenty-five per cent. were declared temporarily unfit and put back for re-examination next year. The remaining 10 per cent. were classified totally unfit, and were excused service.

Of the three categories, fit but not required, temporarily unfit, and totally unfit, if we take an average of 20 per cent. to represent those who under the stress of war can be called to the colours, it is possible to calculate the number of men that in 1914, 1915, 1916 Germany could reckon on as a normal yearly increase in her fighting strength. Allowance has to be made here for men called back for munitions, railway, and necessary home service work. Since the beginning of the war the Germans have put into the line the 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, and some portions 1918, classes, and they have called up a part of the 1919 class to the depôts.

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Drafts on the
Future.

In estimating these facts at their true proportion there are many other considerations to be taken into account. The Higher Command in Germany at the end of 1914 was undoubtedly forced to the conclusion that the war was going to last a considerable time. All idea of a "short, sharp, decisive" struggle was abandoned. It behoved them, therefore, to husband their forces. To call up classes before their time was to draw dangerous drafts on the future.

But they were obliged to run the risk. Last year, having exhausted five classes, they were obliged to re-examine under more searching conditions those who had been previously rejected as "permanently unfit." Besides this, the Government proceeded to comb out labour, beginning with the agricultural labourer. Then the industrial population was submitted to the process, and even munition factories were obliged to furnish "cannon fodder."

Those who believe that Germany possesses a mysterious reserve of men must acknowledge that the figures are against

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them, but at the same time we must allow that she has a good, honest, calculable reserve in her depôts. The reckless way in which she is willing to shed her sons' blood in vain attacks and impossible counter-attacks has had its effect.

On the other hand, it is not to be denied that the losses of the Entente have been very considerable. That is true enough, but they have been divided between Russia, France, and England, while Germany has borne the chief burden of the war, as far as the Central Powers are concerned. It will be contended that even in England we take lads of eighteen into military service, but then we have not combed out as the Germans have, nor do we put lads of that age into the line.

But if the calling up and placing in the fighting line of so many classes does not give evidence of a certain shortage of men there are still further indications of numerical weakness. I have stated how new divisions have been formed out of old, but perhaps it is not generally known that the

The
Weakening
of Divisions.

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strength of the infantry battalion has been reduced from 1,050 to 750.

At the beginning of the war the German division consisted of twelve battalions or, roughly, 12,500 bayonets. To-day it is reduced to nine battalions of 750 men each, or 6,750 men. These reductions have been forced on them by hard fighting and heavy losses. Even the artillery has been reduced in the same way. There are only four guns to each field battery, which formerly had six. The remainder have gone to create new formations. At the same time it would be absurd to build too much on Germany's decreasing numbers. She has still quite enough to put up a very stout resistance.

Rations and Comforts.

Here are some interesting facts about the German Army which are not generally known. At the beginning of the war the German field ration was $43\frac{1}{2}$ oz. in weight. The fresh meat ration was reduced early last year by one-sixth. In June last year one meatless day was enforced, and the ration was again reduced by a quarter of

the early issue. The preserved-meat ration was reduced by one-quarter.

It is interesting to note the difference between the existing British and German ration. Our men get $46\frac{6}{7}$ oz., while the German has to be content with $28\frac{1}{8}$ oz. No wonder he shows such amazing power of consumption when he reaches the prisoners' cage.

German troops are allowed, at the discretion of the commander, a daily portion of one-sixth of a pint of brandy, rum, or arrack, half a pint of wine, and four-fifths of a pint of beer. They are also provided with mineral water by the commissariat. As regards tobacco, they have a daily choice of two cigars and two cigarettes, or an ounce of pipe tobacco, or nine-tenths of an ounce of plug tobacco, or one-fifth of an ounce of snuff.

It is also interesting to note that the German General Headquarters are situated on the Western front.

The figures which I have quoted in this article point to a shortage of men in Ger- Conclusion.

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many which must be a source of increasing anxiety to the Higher Command. The pessimists who will refuse to see the light even on a cloudless day are driven to the absurd and ridiculous assertion that Germany has long ago falsified her census returns.

As I have said before, she is groggy, and I am convinced that if England plays her part this year as nobly as she has during the last two years we can give her the knock-out blow before long. But we must give Sir Douglas Haig every man he wants and every gun he asks for. Let us concentrate all our efforts to second him, and he will, I firmly believe, give us complete victory.

It has already been stated that within two months of the year's offensive Germany has been obliged to use about one hundred divisions of the hundred and fifty-odd now on the Western front. This is a fact worth pondering over.

But significant as it is there are others which are even more remarkable. A large

number of the battalions which were formed last year to be incorporated into the new divisions of which I have spoken have already been used as drafts and broken up as independent formations. It is true that nobody ever thought that the Boche could keep up these new formations, and it was not expected that all the new battalions would be formed into divisions. But it was not, I believe, expected that he would be obliged to call upon them as drafts so soon as this,

VI
THE GERMAN MORAL

VI

THE GERMAN MORAL

IT would be a poor compliment to the gallantry and endurance displayed by the troops of the Allies to deny to their common enemy, the German, great courage and wonderful skill in fighting. The Boche has put up a great fight, and certainly we British would be the last people in the world to attempt to deprive him of the reputation he has won.

At the same time, he is no superman. There is reason to doubt that in individual fighting he is as good a man as either the Russian, the Frenchman, the Italian, or ourself. He is part of a great military organisation which had the enormous advantage of being able to choose its own moment for declaring war. The German Higher Command were so conscious of this

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advantage that they planned their operations on the basis of a short, sharp struggle, which was to give them victory at the end of six or nine months at the latest. This plan of campaign was frustrated at the Battle of the Marne, in 1914, and since then the fight on the German side has been merely for the purpose of increasing his means of bargaining at the Peace Conference.

It must never be forgotten, too, that Germany is a silent nation. Her Government allows nothing to be printed which can raise the spirits of her enemies or depress those of her own people. But we know she has been hard hit. "How long can she last?" is the question on everybody's lips to-day. To that question I cannot pretend to give a definite answer. All that it is safe to say is that she will resist as long as the spirit of her people remains bold, strong, and enduring.

A Contrast.

In this article I intend to examine the state of German *moral* both at the front and at home. I shall quote from letters

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found on the dead and on prisoners. Some, undoubtedly, were written at times when cheerfulness could hardly be expected. On the other hand, the majority of them give true indications of the military or national sentiment, and have not been written under circumstances of transient depression.

But even thus it is permissible to question whether in this third year of the war our own gallant fellows may not be feeling war-weary and downhearted. In order to judge of this I asked a friend who did duty as censor to a battalion which had been in hard fighting and were about to "go over the top" again, to let me know in what spirits our men wrote home. He took a glance at ten letters, casually chosen from the lot, and in none of these was there a single word of depression. Some were serious, but most were gay and light-hearted, and all were full of confidence.

In the letters written by the Boche at the front there are frequent complainings about the inadequacy of their own air service compared to ours.

*The Moral
at the Front.*

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"This afternoon," writes one, "twenty-five English airmen were over us and ten Germans. In the afternoon violent artillery fire, and to-night no sleep." "Hostile machine," runs a message from the front line, "has been directing fire of batteries since 7 a.m. this morning. In spite of repeated requests for aircraft protection not one German aeroplane has been seen over our sector." Writing home a soldier says : "Air activity is very great ; the English will soon be taking the caps off our heads."

As for the conditions in the front line, there is ample evidence of the effect of our attacks. Here are a few quotations from various letters :

"We have been in the line since the 17th (May), and there is little to look forward to. We shall soon have to retire again, for the English are close upon us, and this afternoon he has smashed up our wire entanglements." "To-day the Tommies have given us such a thwacking that we did not know where to turn. There are

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no dug-outs to take refuge in." "It is altogether miserable here, for the English give us no peace." "We have come to the worst part of the Western front. We found no trenches or dug-outs. Every one had to make himself a hole and lie down in it for four days and nights in pouring rain. The English had succeeded with large forces against our new positions, and occupied our front line trench. There were very few survivors in the regiment we relieved."

Thus far I have given the plain tale of the simple soldier finding himself in difficult and dangerous circumstances. I draw no great moral from them, but I would ask the reader to note that there is no word or thought of victory in one of them. The utmost the writers seem to hope to do is to "stick it." The following letters are for the most part written some way from the front line and they seem to be written by men of education. Here is an extract from the diary of a Staff officer :

"The physical and mental strain which

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the troops in front have to undergo is so great that *moral* suffers severely. An inevitable and regrettable consequence is the increase in the cases of absence without leave and refusal to obey orders, both trivial and serious. . . . The political and military situation, the dilatory conduct of America, the rupture of relations with China, and, above all, the outbreak of the revolution in Russia and the withdrawal of our front between Arras and the Aisne have contributed to excite a certain nervousness in every one. This has been increased by the persistent rumours of an impending attack on our front."

The writer of the following letter is a man of obvious education and some political knowledge. He is well worth quoting :

"Have received your card with pretty inscription, 'After glorious victory, peaceful prosperity.' This inscription is, let us hope, a phase of the terrible drama which will very soon appear. Only the word 'victory' is interpreted, more especially

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at home, in different ways, and thereby the war is being immensely prolonged.

“ One part of the nation would regard it as victory if we could conclude peace on terms by which the German Empire would lose nothing and also gain nothing. For, in view of the fact that, in spite of so many enemies, we have been able to defend our Empire against hostile invasion, this might be described as victory. Another part would regard it as a defeat, if, in spite of many sacrifices and of the high cost, we were to make peace without adding to our Empire, and for this point of view we are fighting out here and they are fighting at home.

“ The Government itself—and this is the drawback of the whole position—does not dare come out into the open with what it really does want. Let us hope the Government will soon have the courage to confess what it actually does want ; but it does not dare do so out of regard for the influential men. For these people who seem to think we must gain territory at all costs

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the right treatment would be to send them out here to hold the front line until the enemy declares his readiness to agree to this. I believe that after an hour's artillery fire they would waive their pretensions to territory and only wish for peace.

"Let us hope the Government will soon say in definite terms what it does want—either one thing or the other. But I hope it will choose the alternative without territorial acquisition, otherwise it may have some unpleasant experiences. If this should occur and our enemies see which party on our side has won, then we shall get our long-desired peace."

*The Moral of
the Nation.*

So much for the soldier. What about the nation behind him? Soldiers will often grumble even in victory and will sometimes show surprising courage and confidence in defeat. But the real driving force is the spirit of the nation behind the front. I will try to interpret the prevailing sentiment. Here are some sentences taken at hazard from many letters written by friends and relatives to soldiers at the front.

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“ We shall all die of starvation if this wretched war does not soon end.” “ For whom are you poor fellows dying out there? Only for the great.” Here is a man writing about the Boche destruction of French villages: “ But what will the civilians still living there have done? Their property was burnt and everything levelled with the ground. Oh, God! That must be hard. I hope it won’t be our lot, for neither English nor French will show mercy to the Germans.”

I give some more wails :

“ I will also have to go up for examination again. They won’t be satisfied until we are all killed.” “ What we put into our mouths is reckoned out to be too little to keep us alive, but too much to let us die. But they will let us die slowly, so that we don’t feel it.” “ It is high time we had peace, for the people, especially the poorer, are going hungry.” “ Hunger faces us everywhere, and when the summer comes on plague is sure to break out, for already in many places the black pox has broken

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out.” “ Dear Brother,—One is so unhappy that one would like to turn on the gas jet and sleep for ever.” “ Things can’t go on like this much longer, for here people are dying of starvation.” “ It is terrible, this misery.” “ There is now more hunger than love of Fatherland.”

Whatever the German Press affirms or denies, it can never be relied upon for accuracy or sincerity. If it receives a *mot d'ordre* to paint the situation blacker than it is, the Government, one may be quite sure, has reasons of its own. And, on the contrary, when subservient newspapers say that all is rosy and happy, we may be sure that there is some ulterior motive behind it.

In France and in England, therefore, it has been enjoined upon the people to pay little attention to the tales told by the German Press. But in the case of the letters I quote I can claim at least that they are genuine documents and real human documents, too. Whether the voice of the people will now be able to make itself heard in Germany is a difficult question to

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answer. We had best go on the assumption that the people of Germany will undergo a vast deal of suffering and still remain dumb and inactive. All I can do now is to give for what they are worth the real sentiments of the people as they are expressed in letters which were never meant to be seen by anybody but the recipient.

Here is a list of the prices in Berlin in April last : “ Ham, eight to nine marks a pound, bacon the same ; pork, four marks fifty to five ; eggs, sixty pfennigs to one mark each. For sausage mother was asked to pay the astonishing price of sixteen marks a pound.” The mark is about a shilling. And another letter says that a goat kid, that one used to buy for five marks, now costs 25s. 3d. A young gosling just out of the egg costs five shillings. Here are several extracts :

“ But one would willingly make the sacrifices if the end were in sight : and then the injustice and profiteering ! ” “ My own children, and especially my wife, have fallen ill on account of under-nourishment.

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. . . Matters are not bad in the country. Only our clumsy Prussian super-organisation has not enough adaptability to enable it to solve the problem of distribution."

"I should like to eat a bit of eel, but it costs ten marks the pound, and that is too dear for me." "How is food with you? Hunger has stepped in here. Do you know, to-day everything went black before my eyes, simply from hunger." "Here they are taking every one with legs, and even hunchbacks and men with one leg are being taken for clerical work." "The thaw has put all the country under water. It lies fallow just like last year."

Riots.

Such misery as this is bound to have some outlet, and in February, April and May this year there were riotings and disturbances throughout Germany. Here are some details taken from another batch of letters.

"We all had to lay down our tools on account of food. They knocked over a policeman again yesterday in the Schloss Strasse." "The strike is still going on at

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Spandau. . . . To-day the army announced in every factory that every one must return or be drafted into the Army or Navy. That worked." "The police are all being brought back from the front." "In Wittenau the military were called out with rifles and fixed bayonets." "There has been a riot here. They fought quite fiercely." "There is trouble everywhere, very bad in Mainz and Wiesbaden. I hope there will soon be peace, or we shall have a revolution." "Last week there were big strikes here (Wahren). In Berlin 250,000 men and in Leipsic 30,000 people went on strike, but they obtained nothing, for there is nothing."

Several writers state that they have to be careful of what they write to the men at the front, because outgoing letters are censored. But the following very interesting account of an incipient revolution at Kiel escaped the vigilance of the censors:

"You wanted to know what has been happening in Hamburg and Kiel. Well, I don't know about Hamburg, but as regards

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Kiel we had a revolution in the truest sense of the word. As a matter of fact, we have been ordered not to say anything about this in our letters, so you can imagine we had a real hot time. All the docks—even the Imperial Dockyards—as well as the 85th (Holstein) Regiment took part in it. More bread was then issued, and calm was apparently restored. The workmen were relieved at once and then taken on again. Fresh troops were sent to take the place of the others. Till Easter Saturday there was peace. Then, however, it was announced that we have been given too much bread, and that what we had received was to be deducted from the allotment for the following week. Then there was awful trouble! The police attacked with drawn swords, and there were a number of dead. Things are not yet quiet in Kiel.”

Disease. The hunger and privations of the German people have brought in their train the inevitable disease.

“Smallpox has broken out in one district. There have been many cases at

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Greiz. . . . The papers do not describe it as it is in reality." "Smallpox has broken out here in the neighbourhood." "But the worst is that smallpox has broken out everywhere. Houses are closed by the police and all soldiers on leave have to leave." "As you probably know, smallpox has broken out. Of course, this is not published." "Smallpox has broken out here and every one must be vaccinated. I think it is more hunger typhus than smallpox."

The decline in man-power is shown in The Last
Calling-up. many letters. Here are a few extracts:

"We were all (1919 class) mustered yesterday and three of us taken for the infantry. There were 170 of us and only five were rejected as unfit." "Emil and Hans and the others have been passed for the foot artillery. From all the muster of the last few weeks scarcely a man has been rejected as unfit." "On April 12th there is another mustering, when all those of sixteen and seventeen have to present themselves. They are mere children, of course." "The other day I went with a

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friend to the recruiting office and was told that we of the 1919 class will be mustered this month (February)."

A New Way
to pay old
Debts.

I will conclude this article with a few quotations from letters which give a significant insight into the German methods of raising their war loan.

"F. T. came home yesterday for the first time for eight days' leave. But, beforehand, Mr. T. had to subscribe 1,000 marks to the War Loan in return for his leave."

"At the mine they wanted 100 marks for the War Loan from each man. We were willing enough to subscribe, but we told them that they must first give us fifteen marks per shift and then ask us if we would subscribe—the good gentlemen. You ought to be here during this muster and see what fine specimens there are still in Germany. They only weigh between seven and eight stone. The Englishmen could knock down twenty Germans like them at once with the butt of the rifle." "They are now collecting money again. . . . Any one who doesn't give of his own accord has it

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deducted from his wages." "I am going on leave next Sunday till the 11th. Three days of this is 'War Loan Leave.'" "They find it difficult to collect the Sixth War Loan. Now they are turning to the soldiers. Whoever subscribes 100 marks gets fourteen days' leave." "The soldiers are being requested to subscribe, too, here. It is disgraceful to extract their few pennies from the poor soldiers, and this a voluntary loan!"

Great as the suffering in Germany un- The Future.
doubtedly is, it would be a mistake to deduce from the expressions of discontent and unhappiness which I have quoted that Germany is at the end of her tether. She will suffer gladly to save herself, and those who expect revolts and revolutions out of the privations from which the German people are suffering, are doomed to disappointment. The only way to victory lies in hitting the Boche as hard as we can, and to do this we must have the whole united strength of the nation behind the men at the front.



VII
THE "WILL TO WIN"

VII

THE "WILL TO WIN"

IN the preceding articles I have endeavoured to show that the British armies on the Western front were never so confident of victory as they are to-day. I have tried to prove that their confidence is founded on better Staff work, greater resources in guns and shells and all *matériel*, but, above all, in the knowledge that we are the better man. I have set forth evidence of incontrovertible figures and of genuine letters that Germany is feeling the pressure both at the front and at home.

I hope I have shown, however, that victory is not to be secured as the Jews brought about the fall of Jericho, by the mere playing of musical instruments. I feel quite convinced that we can win quickly

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if we put into the fighting line every single man that we can spare and every single gun we can make.

The Task in
front of us.

We are fighting against an enemy who has been taught that he is a superman. He is told every day by his rulers or his newspapers that the proof of his wonderful fighting qualities and his powers of endurance lies in the fact that everywhere he holds his enemies on their own territory. "The world is in arms against us," they say, "but our brave fellows are holding their own. Soon will come the time when our enemies will get tired of hitting their heads against the German stone wall."

And, really, there is a good deal of truth in much of this kind of talk. The Boche *does* hold against many assaults vast tracts of enemy country. But the fallacy of the boast is that he is unable to hold securely what he possesses. Wherefore the German Emperor talks of peace every day and hopes that, by a lucky manœuvre, his enemies may fall into some of his cunningly devised traps.

THE "WILL TO WIN"

That, indeed, is the great danger ahead. The German Emperor is now playing his last cards to save his dynasty. We must beware lest the feeble and the faint-hearted among us may be persuaded, by pity, by perverseness, or sheer crankiness, into playing his game.

Let us cast a rapid survey over the general situation on all fronts. We will begin with the Russian position, for all eyes are anxiously turned there. This year the Russian armies from Riga to Roumania possess more men, more rifles, more machine-guns, more guns, and more ammunition than they ever did since the beginning of the war.

Of one thing we can be sure, and that is that Russia will keep her treaties and will never make a separate peace. The Boche knows this, and is therefore obliged to keep intact his Eastern armies to fend off a possible offensive. He does not attack, because he is afraid an offensive would result in consolidating the Russian parties. At the same time he cannot

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ignore the possibilities of a Russian attack, and so he is obliged to immobilise his forces in the East. This element of uncertainty, though less favourable for us than a brisk Russian offensive, is highly inconvenient to the Boche, and is therefore in our favour.¹

The Italians have done wonderful work this year and have inflicted severe defeats upon the Austrians, who have been forced to deplete their Eastern lines, which are now very thinly held. In Mesopotamia we have won great victories and securely hold what we have gained.

As a sop to the Turks the Germans have sent out von Falkenhayn to concert plans with the Turks for our defeat. But what the Turks require more than anything else is men, guns, and ammunition. These von Falkenhayn has no means of providing, so we need not be very nervous about his plans.

In Palestine our recent activity has been

¹ This was written before the Russians had taken the offensive.

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the means of drawing off large Turkish forces which are heavily entrenched from Gaza to Beersheba. At Salonika we are holding our own and have cleared out the nest of intriguers, with King Constantine at their head, who always threatened our flank and rear.

In France our gallant Allies have made a great offensive, which has secured for them observation all along a long line. As for ourselves, we are getting into our stride with great rapidity. As I have shown, we are beating the Boche handsomely, and he will have to give way somewhere. He cannot stand the strain, and the nation behind is less able to do so.

What we want now is that Great Britain should brace itself for the final spurt; Herein lies our weakness or our strength. The people at home are war weary no doubt, but what have we suffered compared to the German or the French? Our politicians must learn first of all that a strange and—to them—unaccountable thing is happening. We are beating the Boche. When

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they have learned to believe in the skill and boundless courage of our splendid fellows in France they will then, I hope, tell the people, so that out of renewed confidence we find strength for this great final effort.

**The Need for
Men.**

If the people are told that it is *now* as well as next year that the great effort is to be made, and if they are asked to make it, I for one am sure that the response will be splendid. First of all, we must have men. There are plenty of men in the country of military age. Nearly all of them can be spared, and they will come readily enough.

The other day in France I asked a man returning to his battalion from leave, to whom I had given a lift, whether he was not sorry to go back. "Well, sir," he said, "I want to be in at the finish, you know." That is what will appeal to our young men still at home. They will be in "at the finish."

But, willing or no, men must be had. Bear in mind that we have now made the

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offensive cheaper than the defensive, and that further offensives on our part will inevitably bring the Boche to his knees. *Now* is the time. There is not a week to be wasted. If we give the German rest he will pull himself together, but if we go on hammering him all this summer he is bound to lose heart and give ground. And that will be the beginning of the end. But to achieve this we must have *men now*.

It is a very curious thing that the men who govern us do not understand the quality of the men they govern. In the whole of our history an honest, frank appeal for sacrifice to the great cause of our national triumph and the defeat of the enemy has never failed to get a splendid response. We have before us a hard task, but we have passed the worst. Pessimism was forgivable in 1914 and 1915, but in 1916 the dark years had gone and we possessed the men and the means to defeat our enemy.

We are doing it well and quickly, but the gallant armies in France must have behind

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them the full support and encouragement of the people of this country. Without them they will languish and lose strength and courage. Will our leaders realise that our men out there are inflicting defeat upon defeat on the Boche ? And will they understand that they have only to ask the people frankly and openly for further sacrifice to finish off the job soon to get such a reply as would strike dismay throughout the length and breadth of Germany ?

The German Position.

There are many indications that the German Higher Command laid their plans early this year with a view to obtaining a decision before the year was out. We can only guess at his intentions, of course, but from his preparations we can obtain clearer evidence. For instance, last year, with a smaller number of divisions in the field, he found it impossible to keep them up to strength. At the end of September, 1916, many of his divisions on the Western front were but 4,000 strong.

Why, then, in face of this difficulty did he create new divisions ? He could hardly

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hope to be able to keep them up to strength, and as a matter of fact he has already been obliged to break up a good many in order to make drafts of them. That he intended to form them into a general reserve seems to be unreasonable, since the battalion formation would have been a better method than the creation of so many new divisions.

With these new divisions, which were forced by circumstances into a general reserve, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he contemplated a final vigorous offensive in some part of his line. The German theory of war is based on the offensive. To sit down and wait to be attacked is bound to end in defeat. It is, therefore, most unlikely that the Higher Command had during the latter part of 1916 combed out every man, called up the 1918 class entirely, and instituted a great scheme of national service in order to fill the ranks of a great general reserve, destined to sit still and parry the blows of the enemy.

It is much more in accordance with his

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conception of war that he would attempt an offensive with these new formations. At one time it was undoubtedly in his mind that an attack on Italy would give him excellent results. But whatever were his intentions they were frustrated by Sir Douglas Haig's bold offensive at Arras and by the French great effort north of the Aisne and in Champagne.

The ' U '-
Boat Policy.

Other convincing reasons can be adduced for the presumption that it was Germany's intention to exert her maximum effort this year and stand or fall by the result. The policy of an unrestricted " U "-boat attack on all shipping, neutral or British, coming into British ports was bound sooner or later to bring in America against her. Hindenburg and Tirpitz, the reputed advocates of this sink-or-swim method of warfare, have never earned a reputation for diplomacy, but even they were bound to reckon of the probability of adding America to the number of their enemies.

This objection, no doubt, was strongly urged upon them by the Emperor, as well

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as by Bethmann Hollweg, and it is not difficult to guess what were the arguments they used to overrule it. The chiefest was, no doubt, that, though America would reply to their challenge by declaring war, yet she could not make herself felt in the military sense until next year. By that time, they would argue, England would be forced to her knees or Germany would. It would be ridiculous to suppose that even such firebrands as Hindenburg and Tirpitz could have been so wanting in forethought as to shut their eyes to such an obvious contingency.

Some little time ago I had a most interesting conversation with a neutral who had been in Berlin since the beginning of the war. He was strongly of opinion that the theory I have just set forth covered all the facts, and furthermore he told me of a very significant statement which the German Chancellor was said to have made to some friends and supporters of his policy.

They were urging Bethmann Hollweg to resist what they considered to be the fatal

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policy of an unrestricted "U"-boat warfare, pointing out that its inevitable consequence would be to drive America out of neutrality into the arms of the *Entente*. The Chancellor quite agreed with their arguments, but added: "It would be impossible to ask for terms of peace until the extremists had been given the opportunity of trying their 'U'-boat policy."

Save the
dynasty.

It would be an act of sheer treachery to the country to preach the doctrine that all is for the best in the best of worlds. A hard and difficult task lies before us. An enemy, strong in the brutal, ruthless discipline of Germany, has to be beaten. The fate of the Hohenzollern dynasty is in the balance, and the Emperor William does not mean to lose his throne without a most desperate struggle. There will be ruthless sacrifice of men, a brutal and iron-fisted diplomacy, forced loans, *levées en masse*, a rigid use of national resources in men, money, and material—in fact, everything will be tried before the Germans cry "Enough."

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But the end will be the most rapid stage of all. To put a term to this horrible conflict we must hit and hit hard now and right on until the end. Victory is, in my belief, in sight if only England takes courage and makes the fullest sacrifices. If we do not, then this awful carnage will continue. To put on the spurt now is the cheapest and quickest way of ending it once for all.

During my stay at the front I was one of an audience of nearly 1,500 men who had come to listen to Harry Lauder. That popular comedian—and, I would like to add, that great patriot—kept his listeners in fits of laughter for nearly an hour. Incidentally it was the seventeenth performance that day, and between his performances he had found time to visit the grave of his boy, killed in action.

Harry
Lauder on
the War

At the end of the evening's amusement Mr. Lauder was asked to speak, and I give his speech to the best of my recollection, because it seemed to me to interpret in a picturesque form the ideals and issues involved in this terrible war.

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“Boys,” he said, “do you know what you are fighting and dying for? I’ll tell you. One winter’s afternoon, just as the light was failing, I was resting in my lodgings between two performances. As I looked out of the window I saw in the lower part of the road lights appearing one by one. The lamplighter was at work. Gradually the dark street became bright. Bit by bit the light spread up to the street in front of me and went on up the hill, each light driving away the darkness of the winter evening. Boys, you are lamplighters. You are dying every day in order that your children and your children’s children shall enjoy the light of civilisation and the comfort of freedom.”

Hearty cheers of keen understanding greeted this speech, but not a sound was uttered by his audience when he proceeded to tell the story of his visit that day to the grave of his boy. I cannot help quoting what he said, in spite of the fact that he was speaking without a thought of being reported. But his words burned with such

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splendid patriotism and will be such comfort to others who have lost their dear ones that I am sure he will forgive the indiscretion.

"To-day," he said, "I was at the graveside of my dear boy, killed in action. I had only one prayer and desire, and that was that God would allow the grave to open for one minute so that I could kiss him on each cheek and thank him for what he has done for his country."

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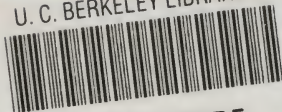
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